District Review Report

School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria)

April 4 – 7, 2004

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Sheila Rooney, Superintendent, School District No. 41 (Burnaby)

District Review Report

2003/2004

District Name:	Greater Victoria
District Number:	61
Superintendent:	John Gaiptman
Date of Visit:	April 5-7 2004
Team Chair:	Sheila Rooney, Superintendent, School District No. 41 (Burnaby)
Team Members:	Valerie Broman, Parent, SD 23 (Central Okanagan) Steve Cardwell, Assistant Superintendent, SD 37 (Delta) Rick Davis, Superintendent, Liaison, Ministry of Education Cathy Elliott, Manager, Program Development, BCPVPA Sonia Hutson, Associate Superintendent, SD 39 (Vancouver) Yrsa Jensen, Principal, SD 36 (Surrey) Valerie London, Community Services Manager, Abbotsford, Ministry for Children and Family Development Jaye Sawatsky, Literacy Coordinator, SD 37 (Delta) Susan Spalding, Teacher, SD 82 (Coast Mountain)

Context

The purpose of the District Review is to provide feedback and recommendations to the District, the Ministry of Education and the public regarding the District's work in improving student achievement by:

- Reviewing district and school achievement data
- Reviewing the district's accountability contract and school plans to improve student achievement
- Making recommendations to the Board and to the Minister about improving student achievement
- Identifying promising practices that will assist other districts and schools in their efforts to improve student achievement

The Greater Victoria School District serves students from the municipalities of Saanich, Esquimalt, View Royal, Oak Bay and the City of Victoria. Approximately 205,195 people reside within the School District. Of these 7.1% of the homes are non-English and 3.4% are Aboriginal with the rural population at 0%. Students come from diverse socioeconomic levels with 25 of 50 schools qualifying for CommunityLINK (Learning Includes Nutrition and Knowledge) funding.

Enrolment is 20,236 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) students and has been declining since 1996. It is projected to decline each year from the present to 2010 when enrolment will likely be less than 18,000. School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) enrolls:

- 9,661 elementary students
- 2,076 middle school students
- 8,499 secondary students (including Continuing Education and Alternate Programs, school age and adult students)
- 1,302 Aboriginal students enrolled in an Aboriginal Education Program
- 471 students enrolled in low incidence / high cost special education programs

The District Aboriginal population has been showing growth over the past decade and is forecast to continue to grow.

The District is in its second year of reconfiguring schools to Grades K-5, 6-8 and 9-12. Recent surveys have indicated a high satisfaction level in newly configured schools. The District offers a wide range of programs of choice at the secondary level. There are 1,067 students enrolled in 56 career programs. In addition, there are a variety of district programs including Flex Studies, Soccer and Baseball Academies, Jazz Studies, a Challenge Program for gifted learners as well as French Immersion K-12. Three elementary schools, Blanshard, Fairburn and Uplands were closed at the end of June 2003 as a measure taken by the Board of Trustees to address on-going budgetary pressures and declining enrolment. Two more elementary schools, Hampton and Richmond, are to close June 30, 2004.

Summary of Process

Review Team Activities:

- The District Review Team Chair met with the Superintendent of the District prior to the review.
- The Superintendent and the Review Team attended two days of District Review training.
- On the first evening of the district review the Review Team met with trustees, senior staff, administrators, teachers, students and community members who presented various district programs and initiatives.
- The next day the Review Team met with senior and district staff who presented an overview of the District that included in-depth information regarding the 10 Points of Inquiry. Members of the Review Team met with members of the Songhees Nation Education Council, the "Boulder Group", the Professional Relations Committee, and some attended a family of schools presentation to trustees.
- Over the course of the review, members of the Review Team met with 20 school teams for approximately 2 hours each. During the school visits the Review Team met with parents, students, teachers, support staff, trustees, administrators, School Planning Councils, and members of the First Nations community.
- Team members met with trustees, DPAC Executive, and members of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

The schools visited included:

Tillicum Elementary, Monterey Elementary, Willows Elementary, Frank Hobbs Elementary, Gordon Head Elementary, Braefoot Elementary, George Jay Elementary, Craigflower Elementary, View Royal Elementary, Lake Hill Elementary, Oaklands Elementary, Macaulay Elementary;

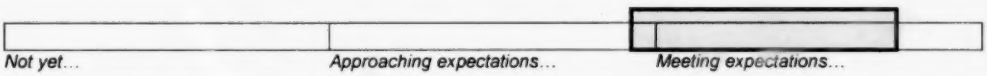
Oak Bay Secondary, Mount Douglas Secondary, Esquimalt Secondary, Shoreline Middle School, Reynolds Secondary, Lambrick Park Secondary, James Bay Community School, S.J. Willis Secondary.

Additional Data

In addition to the District's Accountability Contract and the School Improvement Plans for all schools, the Review Team considered the Ministry School Performance Reports, the School District Profile and a wide range of district and school-based materials.

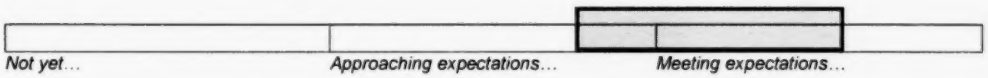
Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. *Goals:*
   Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals for improving achievement for all students.



   - The District has set clear goals based on student achievement.
   - Most schools have set specific and relevant goals and objectives that are focused on student learning.
   - Some schools are in the early stages of setting their goals based on evidence.

2. *Rationale:*
   Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, **based on evidence**, for the selection of their student achievement goals.

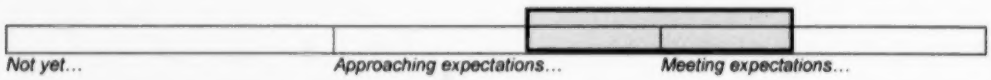


   - District goals have a sound rationale and are directly based on evidence.
   - The rationale for most school goals are derived from relevant data.
   - Some schools need to more clearly articulate the rationale for their goals and ensure that these goals are based on evidence.

District Review Report

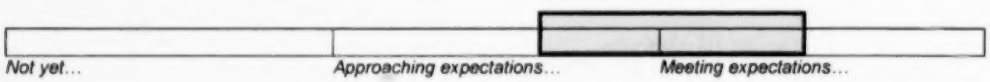
2003/2004

3. *Data:*
Improving districts and schools are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school, district and provincial data. The analysis of this evidence informs the selection of the district goals and is used to monitor progress.



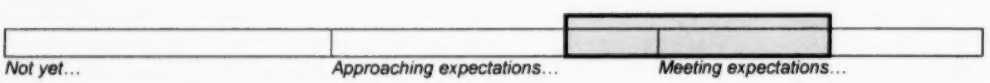
- The District encourages data driven dialogue at the district and school levels and with partner groups.
- There are limited sources of district level data.
- Most schools are at the early stage of determining appropriate assessment tools and collecting base-line data.
- Many schools are using or exploring the use of the Performance Standards.

4. *Strategies:*
Improving districts and schools have well-organized, focused improvement plans in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.



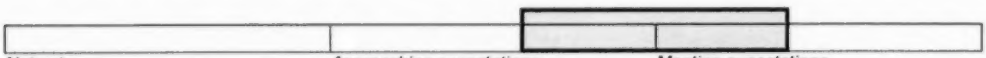
- The District and many schools are using a variety of strategies to improve student achievement.
- In some schools it is unclear how selected strategies support the goals.

5. *Structures:*
Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, organizations – to get the results they want. This includes, but is not limited to, effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



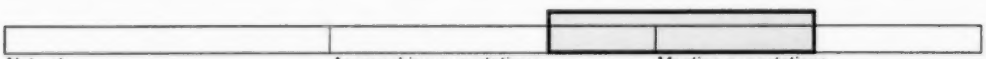
- The District and many schools have aligned structures that support goals for student achievement.

6. *Results:*
Improving districts and schools get improved results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



- The District and most schools are monitoring results and making adjustments accordingly.
- Some schools are making progress toward identifying perform ance targets based on data.

7. *Communication:*
Improving districts and schools are involved in continuous dialogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made in specific areas of focus.

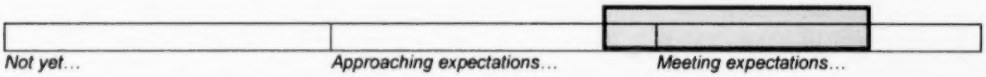


- The District is involved in continuous dialogue about student achievement.
- Most schools are knowledgeable about and make public their school goals and the achievement of their students.

8. *Teamwork – District and School Coherence*:
Improving districts and schools have an interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and school-district directions are both valued.

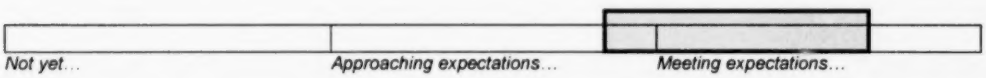
- School Plans inform the District Accountability Contract and the Accountability Contract guides the development of the School Plans.
- In the majority of schools a connection between the District Accountability Contract and School Plans is evident.
- Where appropriate, School Plans include goals that reflect the unique priorities, needs and context of their communities.

9. *Teamwork – District and Parent Involvement:*
Improving districts and schools work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, to improve student achievement.



- The process of developing the Accountability Contract was inclusive with opportunities for input and feedback from partner groups.
- School Planning Councils are supportive and committed to the improvement of student learning.

10. *Leadership / Teamwork:*
Leaders in improving districts and schools have a clear vision for, and commitment, to improving achievement for all students. Leadership at all levels, in all roles, is encouraged and systematically developed in a collaborative learning community with a focus on improving student achievement.



- District leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to improving student achievement.
- There are opportunities for shared leadership.
- Most schools foster teacher, parent and student leadership.
- Some schools need to encourage full partner participation in the development of School Plans.

Strengths

Team observations of particular strengths related to student achievement at the District level and in specific schools.

- The Families of Schools Network.
- Conscious effort to build, establish and maintain respectful partnerships with the First Nation communities.
- Oral Reading Comprehension Assessment Grades 2-8.
- Individual student tracking.
- Development of a District Data Warehouse.

Promising Practices

Some of the promising practices observed by the District Review Team included:

- Family of Schools
- K-5 Literacy Initiative
- Initiatives to engage parents
  - "Let's Read" K-5 video for parents
  - Bannock and Books
- Home Instruction Program Pre-School Youngsters (HIPPY) Program
- First Nation Elders in the schools
- Reconnect Youth Program
- First Nations Focus Network jointly sponsored by the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association (GVTA), the school district and CUPE.

Recommendations

Team recommendations for strengthening school and district focus on student achievement and for improving results.

- Monitor the school completion rate for year-over-year improvement in **each** secondary school.
- Support middle and secondary schools in the systematic implementation of instructional strategies that engage ***all*** learners.
- Continue to promote growth in assessment practices including assessment ***for*** and ***as*** learning.

Members of the Songhees Nation told the Review Team that dialogue has begun. Members of the Esquimalt Nation told the Review Team that there must be a balance between their cultural identity and education. It is critical for the Esquimalt Nation that they become partners in the planning and evaluation of programs.

- Further strengthen the relationship and dialogue with the Songhees Nation.
- Involve and strengthen the voice of the Esquimalt Nation in the planning and evaluation of programs and ensure that they are full partners in the process.
- Further develop the relationship with all persons of Aboriginal ancestry.

Further:

- Consider the establishment of a process to engage student participation and leadership at the district level.
- Consider the use of data from outside sources (agencies) e.g. Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Early Developmental Instrument (EDI).
- Further disaggregate data e.g. gender.
- Develop additional district and school level assessment indicators.
- Clarify the meaning of strategies and structures within the planning process.